

## The *SIPPS* Program: Evidence Base and Impact

### Introduction

Center for Collaborative Classroom continuously learns and evolves alongside our district partners. For over 38 years we have conducted research, analyzed data, and worked in classrooms to create and revise programs and services that support students' academic and social development while supporting ongoing teacher learning.

### The *SIPPS* Program

The *SIPPS*®: *Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words* program is based on the premise that beginning literacy is best taught through two distinct strands: one focusing on comprehension and the other on decoding. As the main components of comprehension differ from decoding in both their nature and the pace of acquisition, beginning readers are able to understand language and ideas at a much higher level than they can decode. Because of this, programs that combine decoding and comprehension in a one-size-fits-all program shortchange student learning in both domains. To combat this, a stand-alone instructional decoding program, such as *SIPPS*, teaches decoding in a way suited to each child's individual needs and abilities.

Decoding has two separate, but interwoven components: word recognition strategies and fluency. Students must have the tools to decode unfamiliar spelling patterns accurately and independently, while also being able to read words quickly and effortlessly. The ultimate goal is automaticity, the quick and effortless recognition of most words.

The *SIPPS* program corresponds to three developmental levels of progression in decoding: simple alphabetic (*SIPPS* Beginning Level), spelling pattern (*SIPPS* Extension Level), and polysyllabic/morphemic (*SIPPS* Challenge Level). Instruction at the Beginning and Extension Levels includes concepts of print, phoneme awareness, phonics, and high frequency sight words. Instruction at the Challenge level focuses on syllabic patterns and morphological units. *SIPPS* Plus was specifically designed for students in grades 4–12 that need instruction in the simple alphabetic and spelling pattern phases.

Once the students have mastered much of single-syllable phonics and many high frequency sight words, the focus shifts to syllabic units to significantly increase polysyllabic decoding skills. *SIPPS* Challenge Level de-emphasizes rules for dividing words and, instead, emphasizes reading syllables automatically and identifying likely syllables in a polysyllabic word. Students learn strategies for decoding and spelling words with more than one syllable. The content includes six syllable types (open syllables, closed syllables, syllables with finale e, syllables with vowel pairs, r-controlled syllables, and consonant-l-e syllables), syllabic generalizations (vowel-consonant-consonant-vowel and vowel-consonant-vowel patterns), and morphological units,

including common prefixes, roots, and suffixes. Extensive experience reading and spelling polysyllabic words with the teacher's guidance increases students' reading proficiency.

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## The Evidence Base for *SIPPS*

The pedagogy of Collaborative Classroom’s *SIPPS®: Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words* program is informed by best practices and research-based recommendations for reading instruction. This Evidence Base guide was developed to highlight the research support for the instructional practices in *SIPPS* and common elements of the instruction that align with those practices. It is intended for review alongside the Theory and Research Appendix of each *SIPPS Teacher’s Manual*.

This guide was developed by drawing on national literacy reports and Institute for Education Sciences (IES) practice guides (see reference lists for more detail).

This guide may be used by curriculum adoption committees, district administrators, research staff, teachers, literacy coaches, or grant writers to cite relevant sources, develop ESSA plans, develop research studies, or support implementation and professional learning.

The following high-leverage practices are integral to the *SIPPS* program:

- Provide explicit instruction and connected, independent reading
- Provide assessment and differentiation
- Provide connected reading opportunities in service of comprehension
- Establish early reading foundational skills
  - Phonological Awareness
  - Phonics and Decoding
  - Fluency and Accuracy

### Evidence Base for the *SIPPS* Program

	Recommended Instructional Practices	<i>SIPPS</i> Program Features	Sources
Provide explicit instruction and connected, independent reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading and discussion of text</li> <li>● Ensure each student reads connected text every day to support reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension</li> <li>● Give students reading choices</li> </ul>	Beginning Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reading a Story and Re-reading a Story Routines with Little Books</li> </ul> Extension Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reading a Story and Re-reading a Story Routine with Story Book, Lessons 1–23</li> <li>● Individualized Daily Reading (IDR) and Fluency Practice Routine with self-selected, easy-to-read trade books, Lessons 24–40</li> </ul> Plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reading a Story and Re-reading a Story Routine with <i>Dreams on Wheels</i></li> </ul> Challenge Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Individualized Daily Reading (IDR) and Fluency Practice Routine with self-selected trade books</li> </ul>	<b>IES Practice Guide(s):</b> <a href="#">Foundational Skills (2016)</a>

Provide assessment and differentiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide time for differentiated reading instruction for all students based on assessments of students' current reading levels</li> <li>• Adjust instruction or differentiate instruction based on assessments of student progress</li> </ul>	<p>Placement Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SIPPS</i> K-3 Placement Assessment</li> <li>• <i>SIPPS</i> 4-12 Placement Assessment</li> </ul> <p>Ongoing Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastery Tests (Beginning Level, Extension Level, and Plus)</li> <li>• Progress Monitoring (Challenge Level)</li> </ul>	<p><b>IES Practice Guides:</b>  <a href="#">RtI (2009)</a>  <a href="#">Adolescent Literacy (2008)</a></p>
Reading Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure students apply comprehension strategies</li> <li>• Ensure students should read connected text everyday to support comprehension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the Reading a Story Routine, students discuss comprehension questions after reading.</li> <li>• During IDR/Fluency Practice Routine, students retell trade books they have read.</li> </ul>	<p><b>IES Practice Guide(s):</b>  <a href="#">Foundational Skills (2016)</a></p> <p><b>National Reading Panel:</b>  <a href="#">Teaching Children to Read (2000)</a></p>
<b>Establish Early Reading Foundational Skills</b>			
Phonological Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop awareness of segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters</li> <li>• Teach students to manipulate phonemes</li> </ul>	<p>Beginning Level, Extension Level, and Plus include phonological awareness routines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral blending and segmenting of words and syllables</li> <li>• Blending onsets and rimes</li> <li>• Identifying beginning, middle, and ending sounds</li> <li>• Oral blending and segmenting of phonemes</li> <li>• Recognizing and producing rhyming words</li> <li>• Segmentation of onsets and rimes</li> <li>• Adding and substituting phonemes</li> </ul>	<p><b>IES Practice Guide(s):</b>  <a href="#">Foundational Skills (2016)</a>  <a href="#">RtI (2009)</a></p> <p><b>National Reading Panel:</b>  <a href="#">Teaching Children to Read (2000)</a></p> <p><b>National Early Literacy Panel:</b>  <a href="#">Developing Early Literacy (2008)</a></p>
Phonics and Decoding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, recognize sound-spelling patterns, and write and recognize words</li> <li>• Provide systematic phonics instruction</li> <li>• Support detecting or manipulating small units of sounds in words and alphabetic knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>Beginning Level- Alphabetic Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single consonants</li> <li>• Short vowels/CVC patterns</li> <li>• Consonant digraphs</li> <li>• Spelling-sound relationships</li> <li>• Sight words</li> </ul> <p>Extension Level- Spelling-pattern Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Lessons include single consonants, short vowels/CVC patterns, and consonant digraphs</li> <li>• Consonant blends</li> <li>• Long vowels/CVCE patterns</li> <li>• Inflectional endings</li> <li>• Complex vowels</li> <li>• Two-syllable decoding</li> <li>• Spelling-sound relationships</li> <li>• High-frequency words</li> </ul> <p>Plus</p> <p>Specifically designed to provide intervention for students in grades 4–12 who need decoding support in the simple alphabetic and spelling-pattern phases and sight word instruction.</p>	<p><b>IES Practice Guide(s):</b>  <a href="#">Foundational Skills (2016)</a>  <a href="#">RtI (2009)</a></p> <p><b>National Reading Panel:</b>  <a href="#">Teaching Children to Read (2000)</a></p>

		<p>Challenge Level- Polysyllabic/Morphemic Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sight syllables</li> <li>• Polysyllabic words</li> <li>• Syllabic transformations</li> <li>• Schwa</li> <li>• Morphemic transformations</li> <li>• Syllabication Strategies : open and closed syllables, VC/CV splits, V/CV and VC/V splits, V/V splits</li> <li>• Spelling-sound relationships</li> </ul>	
<p>Fluency and Accuracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need to be able to read fluently and accurately</li> <li>• Students should read connected text every day to support fluency</li> </ul>	<p>Beginning Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read quietly aloud at the end of each lesson initially for 5 minutes and increase to 15 minutes. Accuracy checks occur weekly.</li> </ul> <p>Extension Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read quietly aloud initially for 10 minutes and eventually read silently for 30 minutes. When a student becomes automatic they then begin to read silently. In Lessons 24–40, students read silently from “easy reader” trade books for 30 minutes. Accuracy checks occur weekly.</li> </ul> <p>Plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read from the Plus reader initially for 5 minutes and increasing to 20 and then 30 minutes. When a student becomes automatic they then begin to read silently (IDR). Accuracy checks occur weekly.</li> </ul> <p>Challenge Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read from trade books for at least 30 minutes each day. Accuracy checks occur weekly.</li> </ul>	<p><b>IES Practice Guide(s):</b>  <a href="#">Foundational Skills (2016)</a>  <a href="#">RtI (2009)</a></p> <p><b>National Reading Panel:</b>  <a href="#">Teaching Children to Read (2000)</a></p>

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## **Section 2: District Reported Data**

### **Sarasota County, Florida and Charlotte County, Florida (2019)**

A grant-funded program in two Florida school districts showed huge gains in reading fluency and comprehension after implementing the *SIPPS* program. The program, YMCA Reads!, is an out of school, intensive reading program that targets at-risk and low income kids in kindergarten through grade 3 that are referred to the program by their teachers. On average, students exit the program with an average of 1.5 years of improvement. At the Englewood Elementary YMCA Reads! program, 98% of students showed an increase in i-Ready scores and all grade levels gained an average of 1.5 academic years of growth. At Myakka River Elementary, 100% of kids in the program had increased reading scores. For more information about the program, please visit <https://www.heraldtribune.com/news/20190715/ymca-reads-in-sarasota-and-charlotte-counties-shows-huge-gains>.

### **Sioux Falls School District, South Dakota (2018–19)**

Students in the Sioux Falls School District received Tier 1 instruction from the *Being a Reader* program. Students in grade 1 that were identified as needing Tier 2 support received instruction in *Being a Reader's* aligned intervention, the *SIPPS* program. The district piloted the *SIPPS* program in four schools. The pilot experimented with two different models: in the first model, two schools used a dedicated *SIPPS* teacher. In the second model, classroom teachers taught the program to students identified as below grade level by NWEA MAP. While the district found that having a teacher dedicated to the instruction was the more successful model, results were overwhelmingly in support of *SIPPS*. The district reported that almost all grade 1 students that received instruction in *Being a Reader* and *SIPPS* made one to two year's worth of growth.

### **Pajaro Valley Unified School District, California (2017–2018)**

In an effort to reduce the percentage of students that required Tier 3 instruction, leaders in Pajaro Valley Unified School District partnered with CORE (Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education) to improve the implementation of the *SIPPS* program. CORE worked hands-on with classroom teachers and instructional coaches at pilot schools to provide training within the context of *SIPPS*. Results indicated a 20 percent increase in achievement among first grade students in the *SIPPS* program, as measured by Fountas & Pinnell scores (74% proficiency in coding and comprehension to 94% proficiency). For more information about the work Pajaro Valley Unified School District is doing in partnership with CORE, please visit <http://2tphyd2raecs4dg3oo3o9r3c-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/pvUSD-success-story.pdf>

### **Sacramento, California (2002): Effects on Decoding Ability**

In an early pilot study involving approximately 25 first grade students at a single school in the Sacramento, CA area, the percentage of nonreaders dropped from 66% to 10% and the percentage of students reading at or above the primer level increased from 34% to 70%. The encouraging results from this pilot prompted a more careful assessment of program effects, using a norm-referenced measure of decoding ability, in a larger field test. The field test involved approximately 200 second through sixth grade students at a school in West

Sacramento, CA, where the student population was 93% socioeconomically disadvantaged, 62% Hispanic, and 33% limited English proficient. Effects on decoding ability were evaluated using fall and spring scores on the *Slosson Oral Reading Test*. During this two year study, English-speaking students gained an average of 1.6 grade levels in decoding ability each year after seven months of *SIPPS* implementation. This is more than twice the growth that would be normatively expected over a seven-month period. Spanish-speaking, bilingual students showed even greater growth, gaining an average of 2.6 grade levels in decoding ability each year, almost four times the expected growth. These findings are illustrated in Figure 1.

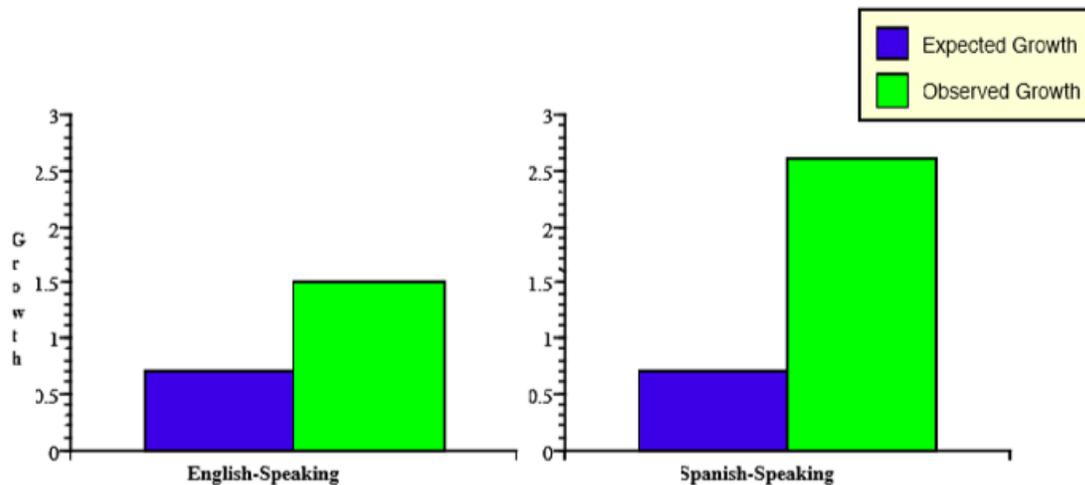


Figure 1. Growth in Grade-Equivalent Decoding Scores After Seven Months of *SIPPS*

### Napa, California (2002): Findings from Comparative Evaluations

Field test findings indicate that students learned to decode considerably faster than would be expected on the basis of normative development. A comparative study of *SIPPS* was conducted to determine whether this degree of improvement was greater than that achieved by an alternative phonics program. This study involved two program schools, one of which served large numbers of Hispanic and socioeconomically disadvantaged students and two matched comparison schools in Napa, CA. A total of 547 students in first through third grades were assessed in the fall, prior to the beginning of instruction in reading, and again in the spring, after seven months of instruction. Students who received *SIPPS* instruction showed significantly greater gains in decoding (approximately four more months of growth in grade-equivalent scores on the *Slosson Oral Reading Test*) than comparison students ( $p < .006$ ,  $ES = .24$ ), whose teachers used Saxon Phonics and other state-adopted phonics materials. The differences were greatest for the school with a large Hispanic, low-SES population, relative to its matched comparison school ( $p < .03$ ,  $ES = .38$ ). These findings are illustrated in Figure 2. Also, as was found in the earlier field test, the gains in decoding from *SIPPS* instruction were greater for Spanish-speaking English language learners than for English-speaking students ( $p < .03$ ,  $ES = .22$ ). These findings are illustrated in Figure 3.

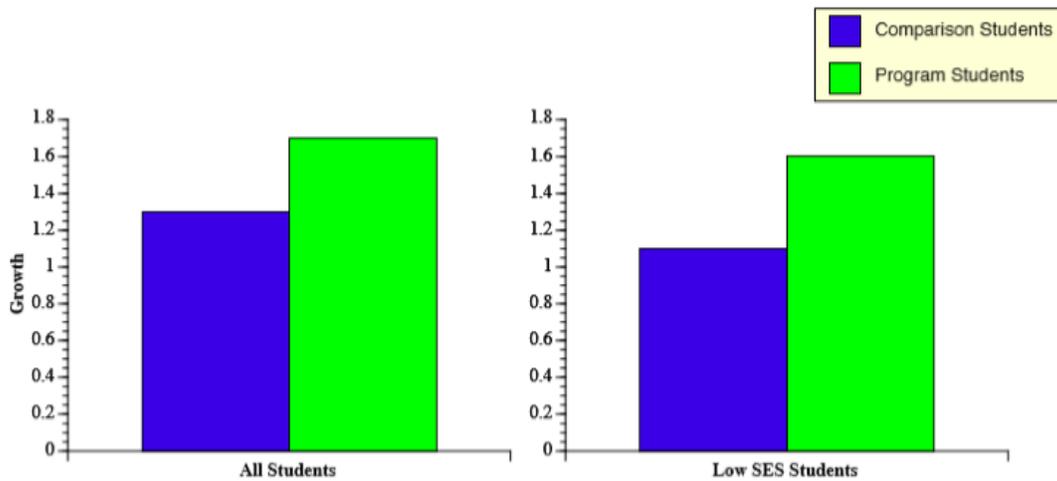


Figure 2. Growth in Grade-Equivalent Decoding Scores After Seven Months of SIPPS Instruction vs. Alternative Phonics Instruction

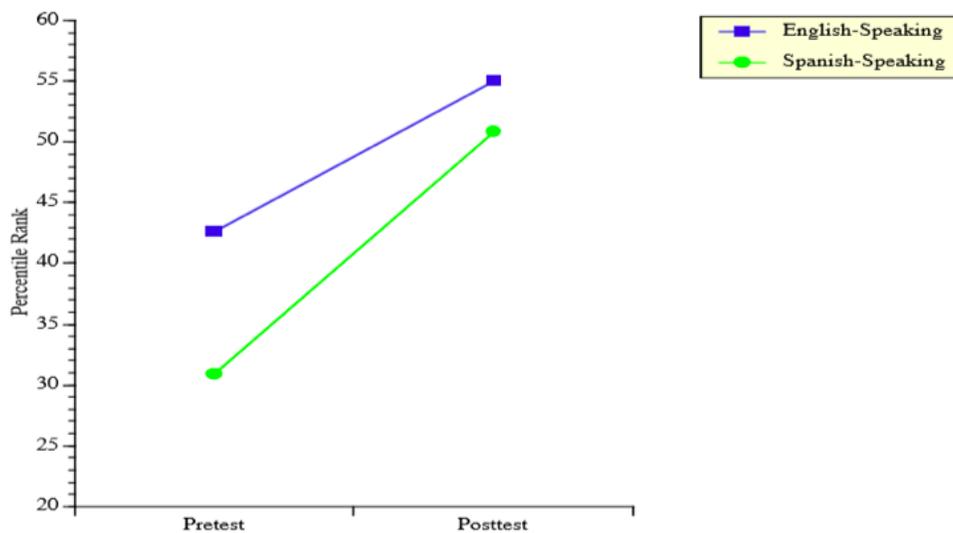


Figure 3. Gains in Decoding from Pretest to Posttest on the Slosson Oral Reading Test for English-Speaking and Spanish-Speaking Students, Napa, CA, 2001-2002

This comparative evaluation demonstrated that *SIPPS* was a better approach to phonics instruction than the other phonics programs used at the comparison schools in this district. The comparatively greater gains it yielded were not only statistically significant, but substantial—in this instance, equivalent to what we would expect if program students had experienced four additional months of decoding instruction than comparison students.

The effectiveness of *SIPPS* has been readily apparent to teachers. Throughout its piloting, field testing, and comparative evaluation, virtually all of the participating teachers (including those who did not like the program when it was introduced) reported that *SIPPS* was very effective with their students and led to substantial gains in decoding ability, as well as increases in students' motivation to read (due to their increased reading ability).

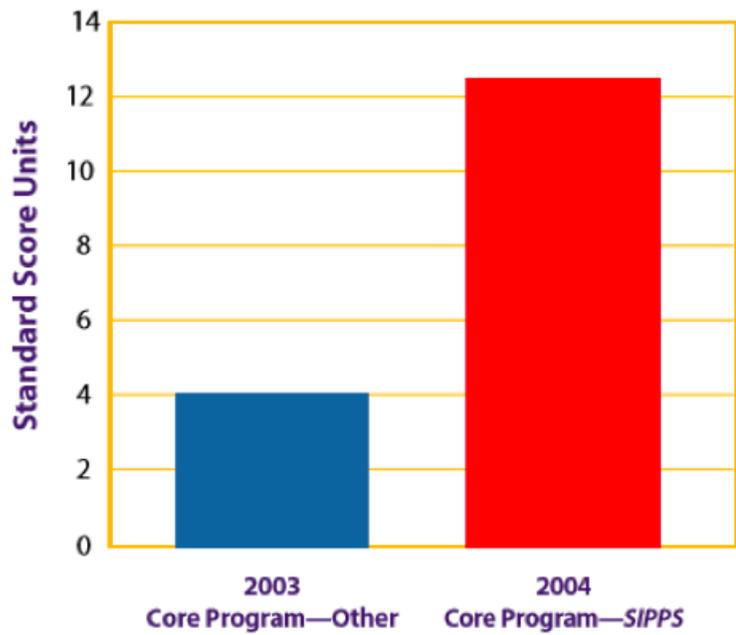
In addition to these evaluations of the entire *SIPPS* program, *SIPPS* Challenge Level has been evaluated in two comparative evaluations. In one study conducted with fourth and sixth grade students from three schools in Austin, TX, that served a heterogeneous, lower- and middle-class population, students received six weeks of Challenge Level syllabication instruction. Relative to comparison students, the fourth and fifth grade students that received *SIPPS* Challenge Level made significantly greater progress in their ability to identify polysyllabic words on the *San Diego Quick Assessment* and the *Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests*.

A second evaluation of *SIPPS* Challenge level was conducted with fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students at two schools serving a heterogeneous population in Elk Grove, CA. Teachers taught a total of 40 twenty-five minute Challenge Level lessons over a three month period. Comparison students received no special instruction. Students that received *SIPPS* made significantly greater progress in their ability to identify polysyllabic words on the *Slosson Oral Reading Test*. Average growth for the *SIPPS* students was 33.4 words, compared to 13.4 words for comparison students.

These findings clearly show that *SIPPS* is an effective program for teaching all students to decode, and indicated that it is particularly effective for English language learners and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. *SIPPS* has shown the largest gains in reading ability for students who typically have the most difficulty learning to read, and therefore have the greatest need for explicit phonics instruction.

### ***SIPPS* and Secondary Students**

In a large urban school district (78,000 students), 56 middle and high school students who were reading far below grade level completed a six-week reading course with *SIPPS* curricula as the core program. Outcome data, gathered from tests outside of the *SIPPS* program, showed more than three times the gains over the previous summer, when a different core program was used.



### Details of the Study

- Urban school district
- 56 students, grades 9–12, reading below grade level
- Summer program
- Six weeks of instruction
- Pre- and post-testing using TOWRE (Test of Word Reading Efficiency)

Comparison between 2003 and 2004 high school summer school program students' average Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) pre- and post-test gains.

## **Section 3: Research Study Summaries**

### Study Title

A Field Study of John Shefelbine's Syllabication Curriculum (*SIPPS*)

### Study Authors

Marcia Lynn Bernard and Susan Michelle Larson

### Publication Year

2000

### Study Summary

The purpose of this field study was to test a curriculum by Shefelbine and Newman entitled *SIPPS* (Systematic Instruction in Phoneme Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words): Challenge Level. The study tested this curriculum's effectiveness in increasing student achievement in decoding single and polysyllabic words. The curriculum, consisting entirely of seventy-five scripted lessons, is primarily intended to teach second and third graders, and reading delayed older students, strategies for reading and writing polysyllabic words.

Ten teachers at two school sites were trained in the instructional program. An experimental and control group were selected at each site, using scores on two measures of decoding ability. The experimental and control groups consisted of intermediate grade students reading at least two years below grade level. Each group contained 22 participants, yielding 44 students from a total of ten classrooms at two school sites. The teachers implemented the first forty lessons from the *SIPPS: Challenge Level*. Both experimental and control groups of students were assessed pre, mid, and post intervention, using the *Slosson Oral Reading Test* (1990), the *Advanced Phonics Skills Test* (1999), and the *San Diego Quick* (1969). The significance level used to determine if a difference existed, was less than (.01). Assessment areas included word recognition and spelling.

### Pre/Post gains on the *Slosson Oral Reading Test* in grades 4, 5, and 6

T-tests strongly and significantly favored the treatment group— $df(40)$ ,  $t=6.823$ ,  $p<.0001$ . The mean gain for students receiving the intervention was three times greater than that in the control groups—36.091 versus 11.8 words; mean pretest raw scores were 81.409 and 86.25 respectively. Note that these numbers reflect changes in ability to read polysyllabic words on graded word lists – not words that were part of the program instruction.

### Pre/Post polysyllabic gains on the APST-XL

Latin-Based Nonsense Words- Students were asked to read a total of 10 words in this category, five were two syllables in length and five were three syllables. The results here examine the words in two ways: (a) how many words were correctly read and (b) how many individual syllables within words were read correctly. Treatment students across all grades were able to read significantly more words with an average growth of 2.955 to 7.682 versus 2.75 to 3.2 for the control groups. The t-test result was  $df(40)$ ,  $t=7.822$ ,  $p<.0001$ . The correct individual syllables analysis produced similar patterns for treatment and control groups: average growth rates of 13.045 to 21.5 versus 12.4 to 14.5 respectively with a t-test of  $df(40)$ ,  $t=6.031$ ,  $p<.0001$ .

Non-Morphemic Nonsense Words: Students again were asked to read a total of 10 words, five were two syllables in length and five were three syllables. As before, the results here examine the words in two ways: (a) how many words were correctly read and (b) how many individual syllables within words were read correctly. Treatment students across all grades were able to read significantly more words with an average growth of 2.818 to 5.773 versus 2.35 to 2.3 for the control groups. The t-test result was  $df(40)$ ,  $t=4.11$ ,  $p<.0001$ . The correct individual syllables analysis produced similar patterns for treatment and control groups: average growth rates of 11.136 to 18 versus 9.35 to 10.4 respectively with a t-test of  $df(40)$ ,  $t=3.986$ ,  $p<.0001$ .

### Study Title

Field-Test Evaluation Of The Child Development Project

### Study Authors

Department of Research, Evaluation, and Organizational Learning Developmental Studies Center  
Oakland, CA  
John Thomas, Ph.D., Independent Evaluator, Mill Valley, CA

### Background: Connecting the Child Development Project and Center for the Collaborative Classroom

Developmental Studies Center, founded in 1980 by Dr. Eric Schaps, received its initial support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and was charged with developing and evaluating a curriculum that supported students' prosocial development. The Child Development Project, as it was eventually called, was rigorously studied and evaluated from the mid-1980s through the late 1990s. The organization received generous grants from nearly every major education foundation, conducted three seminal studies, and published over 25 papers on the impact of the project's work on students' academic and social development.

By the early 2000s the organization made the complete shift from a research organization to one more focused on scaling its impact in the world by providing specific tools and support for improving teacher practice. It began developing literacy programs that supported teacher learning with the research-supported practices developed over the first 20 years of the organization's existence. Since 2000, the organization has continued to create literacy programs that integrate academic and social development for students. In 2015 the organization renamed itself the Center for the Collaborative Classroom to better signal our work in schools.

### Study Summary

This report describes the Developmental Studies Center's (DSC) two-year effort to evaluate the literacy components and some of the community components of its K–6 comprehensive school reform program, the Child Development Project (CDP). The evaluation was conducted at two schools in the Napa Valley School District—Bel Aire Park Elementary, a racially mixed, low-income school, and Mt. George Elementary, an economically mixed school located in a rural area. The program was evaluated in relationship to effects on students at two comparison schools, matched to the program schools on student demographic characteristics and prior academic achievement.

The phonics program, *SIPPS*<sup>™</sup>, was field tested at Napa for two years at the program schools, 2000–01 and 2001–02. Teachers received staff development in comprehension strategy instruction during 2000–01, and tried using these strategies informally with their students during

the school year. Lessons from DSC's newly developed comprehension program, *Making Meaning™*, were pilot tested at the program schools during 2001–02. Elements of the *Caring School Community™* program were introduced in 2000–01, and the community-building aspects of *Making Meaning* were introduced during 2001–02.

*Decoding: Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT).* In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the *SIPPS* phonics program, the *Slosson Oral Reading Test* of decoding ability was administered as a pretest to students in grades 1–3 in the fall of 2001, and to Kindergarten students in the winter of 2002 at both the program and comparison schools, prior to the beginning of phonics instruction. The SORT was administered as a posttest to grade K–3 students in the Spring of 2002, after approximately seven months of phonics instruction for grade 1–3 students, and approximately three months of phonics instruction for Kindergarten students.

*Reading: SAT-9 Vocabulary and Comprehension.* Scores on the state-mandated SAT-9 academic achievement test for students in grades 2–6 were examined from Spring 1998 (three years prior to program implementation) through Spring 2002 (after two years of program implementation at the two program schools) in order to assess program effects on vocabulary and reading comprehension.

*Reading: District Literacy Assessments.* In addition to the SAT-9 data, scores on district assessments of literacy administered to grades 3–6 were examined from Spring 2000 (baseline) through Spring 2002 (after two years of implementation at the two program schools) at the program and comparison schools to assess program effects on literacy.

Student academic achievement was examined using scores from the California statewide testing system (SAT-9 from 1998 through 2002, and California Standards Test in Language Arts in Spring 2002) and district- and state-administered language arts tests (Spring 2000 through Spring 2002).

Findings: First through third grade students at the program schools showed significantly greater gains in decoding scores than students at the matched comparison schools ( $p < .01$ ,  $ES = .24$ ). There were no significant differences between Kindergarten program and comparison students in decoding gains.

The greater gains in decoding scores for first- through third-grade program students were found at both program schools, relative to their matched comparison schools, and at both the traditional and alternative tracks at Bel Aire Park and its matched comparison school. However, within subgroup, only the differential gains for students in the traditional track at Bel Aire Park were statistically significant. Thus, the largest positive program effects on decoding were found among student populations that were largely Hispanic and socioeconomically disadvantaged.

It also should be noted that Kindergarten students had only received 2–3 months of *SIPPS* instruction at the time of the posttest, in contrast to the 7 months of instruction received by

students in grades 1–3. The amount of instruction in Kindergarten may not have been enough by the time of the posttest to yield significant gains in decoding relative to comparison students.

Students at Mt. George had the highest decoding scores of students in the study, scored significantly higher than students at the other three schools on decoding scores at pretest, and scored significantly higher than students at both comparison schools (but not Bel Aire Park) on decoding skills at posttest. The fact that Mt. George students did not have significantly greater gains than their comparison students may be due, at least in part, to a ceiling effect.

Among program students, English language learners showed significantly greater gains in decoding abilities than English-proficient students ( $p < .03$ ,  $ES = .22$ ).

The particular effectiveness of *SIPPS* with English language learners is consistent with teacher reports and the findings from the earlier pilot study of *SIPPS*.

### Study Title

A Syllabic-Unit Approach To Teaching Decoding Of Polysyllabic Words To Fourth and Sixth-Grade Disabled Readers

### Study Author

John Shefelbine

### Publication Year

1990

### Study Summary

This study developed and tested an approach to syllabication instruction that greatly de-emphasizes the importance of rules for dividing words and that, instead, stresses a) syllable automaticity—the ability to identify individual syllables effortlessly and automatically or at sight, and b) syllable pattern identification—the identification, in a flexible manner, of possible patterns of units in a polysyllabic word. In a simplified version of how these components interact when reading polysyllabic words, students identify possible units within a word, relying mostly upon familiar syllables but figuring out unknown units when necessary. They identify, pronounce, and blend the units in a flexible manner until a match is made with a word in their oral vocabulary.

There were 51 students that participated in this study, 28 fourth graders (14 syllabic-unit instruction and 14 control) and 23 sixth graders (15 syllabic-unit and 8 control). Students in the study correctly read fewer than 13 of 22 polysyllabic pseudowords on a measure that followed a 2 by 2 design: two-syllable versus three-syllable pseudowords and morphemic versus nonsense units.

Over a 6 week period, the students in the syllabic-unit instruction group were taken out of their language arts class and taught 30 10-minute lessons, one lesson a day. Four teaching routines formed the core of the syllabication program: transformations, sight syllable practice, practice with real words, and division practice. Students in the control group stayed in their regular language arts classes and received no special instruction.

### Results

Students receiving the syllabic-unit instruction made significantly greater progress in their ability to identify polysyllabic words than did those receiving no special instruction. This was true of students in Grade 4,  $F(3, 24)=5.4, p<.05$ ; students in Grade 6,  $F(3, 19)=13.7, p<.01$ , and students in Grades 4 and 6 combined,  $F(3, 47)=14.5, p<.001$ .